



PRESS RELEASE

Land Commissioner David Dewhurst

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DEWHURST DEDICATES FIRST TEXAS STATE VETERANS HOME ON MEMORIAL DAY

AUSTIN-Texas Land Commissioner David Dewhurst today dedicated the first Texas facility designed to serve veterans in need of skilled, long-term nursing care at a ceremony in Temple.

Named the William R. Courtney Texas State Veterans Home in honor of the distinguished Bell County native and World War II veteran, the care center is the first of four that will open throughout Texas this year.

"I am delighted that the first state veterans home is opening in Temple," Dewhurst said. "It took a lot of cooperation, hard work and prayers to get this veterans home built, and I am committed to building more homes for our loyal Texas veterans."

The three additional homes under construction will be located in Floresville, Big Spring and Bonham. Each home will feature the same design to save building costs.

Dewhurst, an Air Force veteran and Chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board, said the formula used by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs indicates Texas ultimately may need as many as 40 veterans homes to serve the growing number of aging veterans in the state. Texas has the second largest population of veterans nationwide with 1.6 million men and women who have served in the armed forces. Dewhurst said approximately 500,000 Texas veterans are currently 65 or older.

"Last session I succeeded in getting legislation passed that allows the Veterans Land Board to invest up to \$50 million in revenue bonds for the construction of additional veterans homes this biennium," Dewhurst said. "That is enough money to build a dozen more homes if it is used as matching funds required for VA state veterans homes federal grants."

Dewhurst said each state veterans home could save Texans about \$1 million a year in Medicaid costs. Operating costs for resident care and bond repayments will be paid partly from separate federal coffers that will contribute approximately \$50 a day for each resident.

Each Texas State Veterans Home will house 160 beds in spacious rooms. They also will offer a broad spectrum of healthcare services, a comprehensive rehabilitation program, special diets, recreational activities, social services, a library, a gift shop and a secure 32-bed Alzheimer's unit complete with its own courtyard.

Dewhurst said local communities will benefit from 150 jobs directly created by each home. In addition to the \$3 million annual payroll, the services and supplies required to run each home will indirectly generate up to 60 additional jobs. "This is a win-win. Our Texas veterans are finally going to get skilled, first-rate quality care in a home custom made for them; the facilities are going to boost the economies in the communities where they are built; and Texas taxpayers are going to save more of their hard-earned money," Dewhurst said.

Dewhurst was joined at the ceremony by U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards; State Reps. Dianne White Delisi, David Counts and Suzanna Gratia Hupp; Temple Mayor Keifer Marshall, Texas Veterans Land Board member Ladd Pattillo and Brigadier General Jeanette Edmunds of the 13th Corps Support Command at Fort Hood.

Dewhurst said anyone seeking information on Texas State Veterans Homes should call Robin von Rosenberg at (512) 475-2336. Detailed information about Texas Veterans Land Board programs is available on the Texas General Land Office Web site at www.glo.state.tx.us, or by calling (800) 252-VETS.

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